

THE ICONOGRAPHY OF EROS  
AND THE POLITICS OF DESIRE IN KOMNENIAN BYZANTIUM<sup>1</sup>

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And there, "in the midst of the hall, I witnessed a sizable throng of attendants, a mixed crowd of men, women, youth, and maidens, all bearing torches in their right hand [while] the left they held submissively against their chests. And in the center was the youth [that had been previously depicted] in the garden. Eros, the king, the terrible, was seated once again on his golden throne."

"Eros was depicted as a sovereign, and the whole creation stood before him in complete servitude, with the seasons rendered by the artist as men..."

*Hysmine and Hysminias* (III, 1, 23; IV, 20.4-5)<sup>2</sup>

Byzantine literati were masters of political propaganda. Partly classicists, partly orators and satirists, they had a knack for distorting cultural images and political realities, and their talents were utilized in an elaborate system of aristocratic patronage that was instrumental for the preservation of the Byzantine status quo.<sup>3</sup> Their most popular compositions—imperial acclamations in the form of encomia, panegyrics, and ceremonial *ekphrases*—celebrated the sovereign image and the power of human *logos* via rhetoric.<sup>4</sup> The most significant contributions of Constantinopolitan intellectuals to late Byzantine *bios*, however, are captured in their least acclaimed works—the adventurous narratives they produced for the entertainment of the Komnenian court and its aristocratic circles. Similar to their western counterparts that flourished during the same period under the patronage of Eleanor of Aquitaine, the Komnenian novels are popular tales of love and adventure that capture in their imagery the angst of an increasingly vulnerable empire; above all, they are remarkable examples of literary ingenuity and political cunning that have yet to be examined systematically in the context of a turbulent socio-political milieu, and in

light of the demands aristocratic patronage placed on Byzantine intellectuals.<sup>5</sup>

A total of ten novels survive from the Greek Middle Ages: five of these were written under the rule of the Komnenian dynasty (1081-1180) in hypercorrect and often idiomatic Attic Greek, and in close imitation of their ancient predecessors—the Greek novels of the Second Sophistic;<sup>6</sup> five additional works were produced after a half century of Latin rule under the patronage of a newly established Palaiologan dynasty (1261-1453) that regained control of the capital. The literary products of this second revival are more western and popular in character partly due to the influence of the Crusades and the expansive *wespolitik* of the Byzantine court.<sup>7</sup>

Central to the action of all ten surviving novels is the sovereign figure of Eros, a hybrid image of eroticism and tyrannical power that reigns supreme over animate and inanimate creation. Under his influence are his dutiful subjects—the amorous protagonists—who, although well-endowed with reason and rhetorical fluency, are rarely champions of civic causes and advocates of their own desires. So profound is, in fact, the passivity of the principal characters in the face of chance (and of the domineering god of love) that it is as if the writers of the novels “were at pains to create a world in which the initiative does not lie with the individual,” but rather with larger cosmic forces that shape human destiny (Beaton, *Medieval Greek Romance* 62). As a consequence, the projected world of these novels is intently bleak with the principal characters marginalized and deprived of their civic freedoms. It is a world “in which the individual has been scaled down and stripped of the supportive bulwark of the heroic code or the corporate institutions of the *polis*, both of which had included some familiarity between man and the divine” (62).

The helplessness of the protagonists before a destiny shaped by chance and administered by a capricious Eros, however, is by no means Byzantine in origin, although Constantinopolitan writers did employ the theme regularly in imperial compositions;<sup>8</sup> it is instead very much in accord with the hopelessness that permeates the literary predecessors of the Byzantine compositions—the Greek novels of the Second Sophistic.<sup>9</sup> Unlike the destitute and often timid characters of the Hellenistic novels, however, the heroes of the Byzantine novels are well-qualified individuals, exceptional in every way,<sup>10</sup> which in turn begs the question: why create such promising characters if you don’t intend to challenge their potential in the course of the narrative? Why

further endow them with reason and political conscience if you plan to keep their civic involvement under wraps? Roderick Beaton has attributed this peculiar paradox to the propensity of the Byzantines for dramatic expressions of suffering. Public acts of suffering were often seen as an expression of virtuous conduct in Komnenian Byzantium; thus, the protagonists' apathy to Eros's torments was most likely seen as an act of Christian fortitude, alluding to Christ's own suffering (*Medieval Greek* 65). Beaton's exegesis, although plausible, does not, however, account for the creation and subsequent introduction of overqualified characters in action-packed narratives that make so little use of their talents; what's more, it falls short on the iconographic front: if the Komnenian authors had indeed the suggested metaphoric allusion in mind, then why did they choose to showcase their rhetorical talents on elaborate representations of Eros (elevating him to the status of a sovereign) and not on the angst of his tormented subjects instead? I believe we must allow for the very real possibility that the ongoing struggle between sovereign power and human subject in the narratives of the four novels was seen for what it really was: a shameless act of sovereign tyranny. We must keep in mind that the sovereign icon of Eros, as it emerges in the narratives of Manasses and Makrembolites, bears tremendous potential for abuse and destruction, which is significant in light of the administrative and political turmoil of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Furthermore, the lovers' questionable passivity in the face of an abusive sovereign, exposes the dangers of imperial absolutism and brings to the fore the value of bio-political existence. In order to do justice to the sovereign image of love and to the men who conceived it, we must consider Eros in the socio-political milieu that inspired its origin and in the context of aristocratic patronage that legitimized its presence in the orthodox *bios* of late Byzantium. Such an inquiry will help us appreciate the ingenuity and political savvy of Constantinopolitan literati—traits that set them apart from western humanists and establish a standard for Byzantine innovation.<sup>11</sup>

A short review of the characteristics of Eros as he appears in the four Komnenian novels leaves little doubt that his actions were meant to carry political significance. In *Hysmine and Hysminias*, a twelfth-century novel that represents the highest point of Byzantine literary creation under the *Komnenoi*, Eros is vested with all the appurtenances of Byzantine imperial might. He is depicted as the lord of the natural *taxis* that makes the world go round;<sup>12</sup> he is additionally "the only figure in the story that the author invests with what the Byzantines

recognized as the apparatus of divine and monarchical authority: Eros comes complete with a throne, a court, a ceremonial, and a well-developed ruler iconography."<sup>13</sup> In *Drosilla and Charikles*, an earlier novel from the same period, Eros is similarly given the unprecedented title "lord of all" and described as "absolute tyrant over mortals"; he is waited on by the Graces and even hailed in the adaptation of the religious formula, "glory be to Eros the tyrant."<sup>14</sup> The same phrase recurs in Konstantinos Manasses' fragmentary *Aristandros and Kallithea*: "there is nothing which Eros the tyrant will not dare," in a passage which also refers to a lover's vassalage in terms that anticipate the feudal submission of the hero to the god of love in Makrembolites' romance, *Hysmine and Hysminias*: ". . . and having become a slave by the hands of Eros."<sup>15</sup>

This sovereign portrait of desire bears significant affinities with the iconographic tradition of love as it emerges in the ancient Greek novels of the Second Sophistic and the rhetorical works of Nikephoros Basilakes, the twelfth-century Constantinopolitan intellectual who revived the classical iconography of love in his own rhetorical compositions.<sup>16</sup> In at least three ancient Greek novels that are associated with the revival of the genre in twelfth-century Byzantium—namely, Xenophon's *Ephesiaka*, Achilles Tatius's *Leucippe and Clitophon*, and Longus's *Daphnis and Chloe*—Eros emerges as a formidable physical force:<sup>17</sup> he habitually meddles in the affairs of the amorous protagonists, toys with their passions, and prolongs their travails out of sheer boredom or spite. In Xenophon's *Ephesiaka*, in particular, the god of love casts himself as a seasoned interrogator who breaks his subjects using the right balance of intimidation and force,<sup>18</sup> while in Tatius's and Longus's novels he assumes the role of a cosmic potentate whose dominion over animate and inanimate creation is well established through edificatory speeches delivered by converted lovers and works of art that document his most notable conquests.<sup>19</sup>

Some eight hundred years after his initial debut in the Greek novels of the Second Sophistic, the god of love continues to dominate the action of the narratives that host him, rivaling the status of the amorous protagonists under the guise of a repressive potentate. In fact, Eros's conniving nature in conjunction with his sadistic temperament is arguably the single most important attribute of his idiosyncratic character that remains intact after some eight hundred years of cultural, iconographic, and literary evolution. In his Byzantine revival the god of love emerges as a peculiar amalgam of classical Hellenism and

Byzantine utopianism, and this literary innovation raises questions about the needs and purposes this unorthodox image was created to fulfill.

In what follows, I shall examine in detail the dramatic transfiguration of love against the political backdrop of Komnenian Byzantium, and in the narrative context of the four novels that revived the genre in twelfth-century Constantinople: namely, Theodore Prodromos' *Rhodanthe and Dosikles*, Niketas Eugenianos' *Drosilla and Charikles*, Konstantinos Manasses' *Aristandros and Kallithea*, and Eustathios Makrembolites' *Hysmine and Hysminias*.<sup>20</sup> My intent is to show that the figure Eros, "glorious and regal,"<sup>21</sup> as it emerges in Makrembolites' novel, is an ingenious construct—a flexible model (*τύπος*) of sorts—that was revived to serve the literary yearnings of an increasingly sophisticated aristocracy and the political aspirations of powerful patrons who sought new ways to revive the glory of the imperial image in the literature and art they commissioned.<sup>22</sup>

### The Birth of An Unlikely Tyrant

Both the personification of desire and the revival of romance in the East have been widely attributed to new and closer (if not always amicable) contacts between Byzantium and the West, and to the changing sensibilities of aristocratic patrons on both ends of the empire. The twelfth century was a period of unprecedented cultural and intellectual ferment both in the East and in the West as Latin and Byzantine intellectuals were simultaneously rediscovering their respective inheritance in classical literature, and affluent patrons were commissioning works that traced their lineage to famed Greco-Roman stock. In the court of Henry II Plantagenet and his queen Eleanor of Aquitaine this intellectual rebirth brought forth the three vernacular *romans d'antiquité*—*Thebes*, *Eneas*, and *Troie*. In the court of the *Komnenoi*, a similar initiative resuscitated a Hellenistic genre that had lain dormant since the fourth century—Greek narrative fiction—in the form of the Byzantine novel as we know it today.<sup>23</sup>

This almost simultaneous literary flourishing has proven particularly vexing to scholars studying both traditions since it has made a reliable pattern of influence (from East to West or from West to East) almost impossible to establish. In the past thirty years, in particular, compelling arguments regarding the rehabilitation of the genre in the East and the transformation of Eros as a mighty sovereign in it

have been put forth by two polarizing groups of scholars: those who trace the figure's origins (and thus that of the genre) to western sources that arguably predate the production of narrative fiction in Byzantium; and those who consider Eros's anthropomorphism a Byzantine innovation—an ingenuous reworking of a classical archetype.<sup>24</sup> Carolina Cupane, in what remains the most thorough investigation of the image to date, has argued that the transformation of Eros from a mischievous cupid (ἑρέφης) into a fully-grown figure of imperial authority (βασιλεύς) owes little—if anything—to Greco-Roman iconographic traditions, and much more to western influence than had previously been acknowledged.<sup>25</sup> More specifically, in “Ἔρως Βασιλεύς: La figura di Eros nel romanzo bizantino d'amore,” Cupane asserts that the royal imagery of Eros is more likely to have first emerged in Old French and Provençal literature—in the *Fablel du Dieu d'Amour* (late twelfth or early thirteenth century) and in the *Roman de la Rose* in particular—since there the image appears more integral to the narrative structure of the romances.<sup>26</sup> In defense of her argument, Cupane cites “the innate conservatism of Byzantine literature, its lack of a strong allegorizing tradition, and the western influences at work at the Byzantine court during the period of the Crusades.”<sup>27</sup>

Although I agree with Cupane that cultural influences contributed significantly to emergent literary and aesthetic sensibilities in Komnenian Byzantium, I remain unconvinced that western contacts alone were responsible for the revival of a genre that had lain dormant for some eight hundred years. Here, we need only consider the strict control that both Church and Emperor exercised over literary institutions and intellectuals in late Byzantium to acknowledge the shortcomings of such a suggestion.<sup>28</sup> And besides, even if we were to perceive the revived genre as the result of western influence alone, how do we account for the emergence of westernizing trends in a culture that had very little regard for Latin literature and which subsequently lacked the critical apparatus for its evaluation and appreciation? Deeper forces must have been at work for a secular—and by definition marginal—genre to achieve the popularity and influence of the Komnenian novels, and such forces were vested in imperial and ecclesiastical figures that were adept at exploiting ancient Greco-Roman registers to their advantage. It is also worth noting in this context that higher learning was by no means an independent enterprise in Komnenian Byzantium. Both the Patriarchal School and the Imperial University were under the aegis of their eponymous patrons and it is

highly unlikely that either one would have tolerated (let alone encouraged) western influence without careful scrutiny of its social and political ramifications.<sup>29</sup>

The figure of an enthroned Eros surrounded by vassals, as it emerges in Makrembolites' novel *Hysmine and Hysminias*, is an iconographic and textual amalgam of the sacral emperor with the figure of Jesus Christ, following a tradition that Byzantine audiences would have readily recognized in imperial acclamations and in religious art.<sup>30</sup> Both in court ceremonial and in official texts the emperor was often described in terms of Old Testament kingship that highlighted his divine associations and semi-divine status.<sup>31</sup> In fact, Manuel Komnenos, the most frequently celebrated Byzantine emperor whose reign is associated with the commission of the novels, was often likened to Christ, David, and Solomon—in rhetorical acclamations and in imperial portraiture.<sup>32</sup> Besides, as Cupane herself observes in her own study of Eros's origins, the new image of love was by no means foreign to the cultural and literary fabric of Komnenian Byzantium: "Nuovo è il concerto della sua regalità, ma esso si riveste di colori prettamente bizantini: è infatti in veste di βασιλεὺς αὐτοκράτωρ Eustazio ce lo presenta, assiso su un trono aureo ed elevato che richiama subito alla memoria quello famoso dell' imperatore nella reggia di Constantinopoli. Così come prettamente bizantine sono le due figure allegoriche del giorno e della notte che fiancheggiano il sovrano Eros."<sup>33</sup> It is additionally worth noting that the celebration of Eros's sovereignty was not only an important literary preoccupation of Komnenian court writers and their respective patrons;<sup>34</sup> it was also part of a rich iconographic heritage that reached all the way back to Plato and to the ancient Greek novels of the Second Sophistic<sup>35</sup>—sources that Byzantine literati were familiar with, either through their rhetorical training or through peer interaction in literary 'salons' (*theatra*) where many of their works were showcased and discussed.<sup>36</sup>

### Politicizing Desire: From Eros *Tyrannos* to Eros *Basileus*

In the narratives of all Komnenian novels Eros is endowed with the most original attribute of monarchical authority—unregulated power (*ισχύς*)—which he exercises indiscriminately in two respective domains: the universal over which he reigns as a tyrannous force in *Rhodanthe and Dosikles* and *Drosilla and Charikles*; and the civic, which he breaches in *Aristandros and Kallithea* and *Hysmine and*

*Hysminias*, assuming the role of a prudent (σώφρων) potentate.<sup>37</sup> In the novels of Prodhromos and Eugenianos that inaugurate the genre, Eros is distinguished for his prowess and uncompromising resolve—two notable yet potentially dangerous attributes when unaccompanied by wisdom (*sophrosyne*), temperance (*phronesis*), justice (*dikaiosyne*), and civility (*eunomia*), founding principles of civic order and sound Byzantine governance.<sup>38</sup> In Makrembolites' *Hysmine and Hysminias*, Eros is depicted twice in the company of personified abstractions that help define his political outlook while accentuating his civic virtues. In fact, the more memorable of the two iconographic groups appears in Book II of the novel, where the mighty sovereign is portrayed alongside Wisdom (Φρόνησις), Power (Ἰσχύς), Prudence (Σωφροσύνη) and Justice (Θέμις), in an elaborate *ekphrasis* that celebrates the quintessential balance of restraint and prowess. In it, the four virtues, personified as maidens, are depicted in balanced groups of two alongside the mighty sovereign (Wisdom and Power stand to the left of Eros, while Prudence and Justice stand to his right).

The sovereign iconography of Eros as it emerges in the novels of Manasses and Makrembolites bears additional propagandistic and iconographic ties to the court of John Komnenos and the courts of his successors, Isaac and Manuel. We know, for instance, that Theodore Prodhromos, a court poet and contemporary of Makrembolites, on at least one occasion (an oration to *Sebastokrator* Isaac Komnenos II) had imagined the Emperor "sitting on a lofty throne attended by Ares, the Four Virtues, Rhetoric, Grammar, Philosophy, and various ancient philosophers," while Manuel I Komnenos, Isaac's successor, was often praised for his prowess (*andreia*) and wisdom (*phronesis*) while in the company of legendary worthies such as Alexander, David, and Solomon.<sup>39</sup> John II, Manuel and Isaac's father, was equally notorious for his associations with legendary worthies and was frequently praised for his governance in encomiastic speeches that highlighted his military might and prudent leadership.<sup>40</sup>

Such allusions, however, were not merely a means to imperial propaganda, even though metaphoric affiliations with such figures were often inspired by political motives. Literary evidence suggests that the celebration of the imperial image in the literature and art of twelfth-century Byzantium came to serve propagandistic dreams of two powerful groups, the interests of which were often at odds: the aristocratic patrons of the Komnenian novels who identified deeply with the strong military presence of Eros in the literature and art they



commissioned, and the writers of the novels themselves who capitalized on the ambivalence of the new sovereign image of Eros in order to expose the dangers of imperial absolutism. The iconographic evolution of Eros from a loathsome cosmic tyrant in the novels of Prodrōmos and Eugenianos to a formidable sovereign in the novels of Manasses and Makrembolites, thus, points to a rich civic discourse among Byzantine intellectuals on the merits of sovereignty—a discourse that reveals much more about the fears of a politically conscious group of intellectuals than it does about the propagandistic dreams of their patrons. In order to appreciate the promise of the new imperial icon of love (and the ingenuity of the men who engineered it) we must trace its iconographic evolution in the four surviving novels, starting with the works of Prodrōmos and Eugenianos in which the god of love emerges as a primordial cosmic force that bears tremendous potential for violence and destruction.

In Prodrōmos' *Rhodanthe and Dosikles*, a novel that inaugurates the genre in Komnenian Byzantium, Eros emerges as a merciless hunter—a predator of sorts—who torments unsuspecting maidens with desire.<sup>41</sup> Armed with arrows, wings, and fire, he weaves the fates of all mortals into perfect order, albeit by force:

Οὕτως ἐκείνων τῶν νέων τιμαχμένων  
ἐπαίξεν, ὡς εἶωθεν, ὁ δοιμῶς Ἔρως,  
πολλοὺς ὁιστοῦς τοῖς νέαις καὶ ταῖς νέαις  
ἐκ τοῦ πυρώδους ταύρων τοξαρίου. (VIII, 191-94)<sup>42</sup>

ἤλίκον εἰσδέδεκτο τῇ ψυχῇ βέλος  
(ὅποια πάντως οἶδεν ἐκτείνειν Ἔρως,  
φαρμακτά, πικρά, πυρπολοῦντα καρδίας). (VIII, 197-99)<sup>43</sup>

His purpose and sense of justice are questionable, although never by the amorous protagonists who, once initiated in Eros's arts, find themselves advocates of his powers and primal cause.<sup>44</sup>

In *Drosilla and Charikles*, the ruler's disrepute worsens as he evolves into a sadistic force. Eros deceives his victims with false hope; he causes them to believe that they "carr[y] [the] beloved in the fold of [their] robe," only to have them trapped in his nets "just like a mouse who's fallen into a pot of pitch" (IV, 406-10). Hero and heroine blame the mighty tyrant repeatedly for their predicaments in their long

lamentations, deeming him “a nasty creature”, “a leech”, and “a terrible plague”<sup>45</sup> that “ignite[s], combust[s], cremate[s], and incinerate[s]” by most unusual means;<sup>46</sup> and yet, they never challenge his authority or disobey his will. In fact, there is hardly a sign of active indignation on the part of the grieving: “Against him no one on earth has found a remedy,” a confirmed lover admits in Eugenianos’ romance—a phrase that echoes another lover’s affirmation in the same work: “I think that anyone who could pass by and escape Eros, the winged tyrant, could even count the stars in the sky.”<sup>47</sup>

The lovers’ disturbing acquiescence in the narratives of Prodromos and Eugenianos exposes the ethical ambiguity at the heart of the sovereign’s relation to those he subjects and calls into question the existence of meaningful *bios* (βίος πολιτικός) under the aegis of a formidable, yet potentially abusive, sovereign. In the character of Eros, the sovereign power drafts the human subject into his service and places upon him the most outrageous demands, which he inevitably accepts in exchange for deliverance and union with the beloved.<sup>48</sup> Eugenianos’ hero acknowledges the inevitable—“sooner would stones fly winged to the sky / and diamond be cut by sword / than Eros cease to shoot arrows to earth”—and dutifully surrenders his liberties to the loathsome tyrant,<sup>49</sup> while Kleandros, his friend and confidant, fearful of yet another separation from his beloved Kalligone, pledges eternal servitude and seals his submission with a humbling plea: “Let no one fear the sword-sharp darts of desire / even if they are poisoned” (Burton II, 125-26).

The emergent iconography of love (*Eros Tyrannos*) in Komnenian Byzantium appears symptomatic of the crisis the imperial image underwent in the aftermath of Basil’s death in 1025 under the reckless administration of no fewer than thirteen rulers—eleven emperors and two empresses—that brought the empire to an all-time political low. The crisis reached its nadir in 1071 with the capture of Emperor Romanus IV Diogenes by the forces of Sultan Alp Arslan in the Battle of Manzikert and with the loss of the last Byzantine strongholds in Sicily to the Normans the same year.<sup>50</sup> During this period of cultural and political reorientation, the concept of the universal empire provided the ideological base of official propaganda and allowed for generous aristocratic patronage of artists and writers eager to secure the good graces and continuous support of affluent patrons. Prodromos, Eugenianos, Manasses, and Makrembolites were among the few literati who distinguished themselves in this service while remaining critical

(at least in their narratives) of the suppressive conservatism of their dynastic patrons.

More specifically, the iconography of Eros in the novels of Prodromos and Eugenianos captures the administrative and political angst of an increasingly vulnerable empire and the propagandistic aspirations of imperial patrons who sought new ways to revive the glory of the imperial image in the literature and art they commissioned. These seemingly irreconcilable tasks are reflected in the problematic relationship between sovereign power and human subject that dominates the narratives of all four novels. The protection the sovereign power grants the human subject in *Rhodanthe and Dosikles* and *Drosilla and Charikles*, namely, is not only conditional, but additionally—and indeed paradoxically—possible to the extent the lover allows Eros to violate his *zoē*, his very existence, by placing his liberties at the sovereign's disposal.<sup>51</sup> The consequences of this disturbing paradox where the subject places himself in complete thrall to a sovereign who reserves the right to jeopardize his welfare are examined in greater detail in the subsequent romances of Manasses and Makrembolites, where the authors endow Eros with the attributes of Byzantine imperial authority and place him securely in the realm of the *polis*; in doing so, they flesh out Eros's abstractions and weave into discourse a major political dilemma: the disjunction between imperial autocracy and civic welfare. The sovereign evolution of Eros in twelfth-century Byzantium, thus, emerges as a collaborative enterprise among the four court writers: Prodromos and Eugenianos acknowledge in their narratives the problematic relationship between sovereign power and human subject, yet it is not until Manasses and Makrembolites come forth with their respective novels that Eros is liberated from his classical form and placed properly into the realm of civic affairs. It is in the novels of the last two that the paradoxical relationship between sovereign power and human subject is not simply acknowledged, but also confronted—a development that indicates acute awareness of the political conservatism of Komnenian Byzantium and the limitations of civic existence in it.

### **Eros's Bio-political Transformation in the Novels of Manasses and Makrembolites**

In *Aristandros and Kallithea* Eros's destructive potential is channeled into strategic pursuits that place the mighty tyrant squarely

into the realm of civic affairs.<sup>52</sup> Manasses' ruler is no longer solitary, abstract, and indiscriminate, but rather sensible and politic. He makes pacts with "neighbor[s]" (γείτονες) and "comrade[s]" (θυμόν) and this tactical move is further enhanced by the rhetorical allusions the author employs to bring this militant image of Eros to life.

If Eros is scorned, and thus disgraced  
he straightaway summons his neighbor, Anger,  
[and he], in turn, convinced, rises  
and sets ablaze the heart without [the aid of] wood,

.....  
the two wage full war, uniting fellow comrades, and leading  
them into combat, tempting into discord those who were  
lovers once. (II, 145-51)<sup>53</sup>

Manasses' sovereign is additionally distinguished for his resourcefulness and tactical mind, strengths that are manifested in the strategic alliances he strikes and the severity of damage that he inflicts.

Angry as a tiger,  
[and] filled with impudence, audacity,  
and murderous vengeance,  
Eros is determined to win.  
He pleads with anger, his former comrade,  
and along with him, becomes completely undone.  
He prepares for combat, arming himself and howling.  
[And] the two become arch-neighbors and join forces,  
uniting under one roof in the very center of the liver  
and of the heart. (II, 131-38)<sup>54</sup>

Eros's aggressive militarism in *Aristandros and Kallithea* is very much in accord with the militant front of the new dynastic order of the *Komnenoi* and the wave of imperial propaganda that swept the capital in the aftermath of Manzikert.<sup>55</sup> The ascent to power of the military family of the *Komnenoi* in 1081 was marked by unprecedented literary and artistic preoccupation with the imperial image—both in volume and intensity—and by a steady outpouring of imperial dogma that continued uninterrupted throughout John and Manuel's reigns (1118-1143 and 1143-1180, respectively). Paul Magdalino, who has studied the iconography of Eros in the courts of John and Manuel Komnenos,

has exposed an entire canon of literary *topoi* that celebrate the militarism of the emperor and the conservative ethos of the *Komnenoi*.<sup>56</sup> In *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos (1143-1180)*, in particular, Magdalino cites “no fewer than seventy encomia” (and that’s not counting “almost as many more pieces on other subjects [...] which include passages in his praise”)—all devoted to Manuel—that celebrate the emperor’s militarism,<sup>57</sup> while in a later article he convincingly shows that the militant image of Eros was an established propagandistic commonplace in the court rhetoric of the 1150s, drawing explicit associations between the historical image of Manuel I and the erotic iconography associated with his image (“Eros” 200-01). In the same work the author also brings to light three imperial panegyrics produced by a contemporary of Manasses for the court of Manuel in which the emperor is hailed “king of all cupids” (βασιλεύς τῶν ἐρώτων) and assigned traits and sensibilities explicitly associated with the classical god of love.<sup>58</sup>

Forging alliances and managing dependencies is a significant step towards the evolution of a militant, and by definition tactical, ruler<sup>59</sup>—a ruler who, in spite of his brashness and persistent obscurity,<sup>60</sup> must have appealed to aristocratic audiences whose security and confidence were severely shaken after a century and a half of reckless ruling and grave mismanagement. It is no secret that the Byzantines never quite recovered from the disaster of Manzikert: aristocratic audiences in particular remained forever mindful of the ineptitude of Romanus IV—the reckless emperor whose strategic mismanagement had left the empire in shambles—and of their own vulnerability under the reign of generations of incompetent rulers since Basil II.<sup>61</sup> Manasses’ efforts to revive the prestige of the imperial image by exaggerating the military prowess of his fictional sovereign captures the hopes of the emergent dynastic order of the *Komnenoi* and the fears of a vulnerable aristocracy weary of its future under the control of yet another reckless or incompetent ruler.

### Confronting Authority in *Hysmine and Hysminias*

In *Hysmine and Hysminias* the image of Eros undergoes its most substantial transformation yet as the author endows his ruler not only with the virtues, but also with the guise and responsibilities, of a true *basileus*. Eros, “λαμπρό[ς] καὶ ὄντως βασιλικός[ς],”<sup>62</sup> is first introduced in Makrembolites’ romance as a stern young king on a splendid chariot

surrounded by an impressive entourage of men, women, kings, despots, and even animals that pay homage to him "as if he were a god":

An entire army stood beside the youth—a mixed crowd of men, women, young and old—[And even] kings, despots, and tyrants paid homage to him as if he were not a king, but a god. (II, 9.1, p. 18).<sup>63</sup>

The young sovereign is additionally vested with full executive powers: he is supreme commander, senior judge, and sole legislator; he reigns supreme over animate and inanimate creation and, unlike the indiscriminate force of the previous romances, he exercises his power (*ύσχις*) with considerable measure and reason, guided by Wisdom (*phronesis*) Strength (*ischys*), Chastity (*sophrosyne*), and Justice (*themis*)—the four cardinal virtues that stand fully personified next to the "monstrous youth" (*τερατώδες μεράκιον*) in a tripartite panel that highlights the sovereign's powers and divine associations (II. 2.2-6, pp. 12-15).

Makrembolites' most significant contribution to the political *bios* of late Byzantium, however, is not vested in the image's unabashed realism or in its explicit associations with the court of the *Komnenoi*, although these iconographic innovations mark a new chapter in the conception and depiction of love in late Byzantium; it is rather manifested in the subject's emotional and political awakening under Eros's repressive reign. Unlike the authors of the previous romances, Makrembolites confronts in his narrative the paradoxical relationship between sovereign power and human subject (exposing the problematic dependence that Prodromos and Eugenianos had first addressed in their respective novels) by endowing his ruler with the needed reason for sound governance, and his hero with the necessary courage to question authority. In doing so, the author brings to the fore the ambiguities of Byzantine imperial autocracy and calls into question the value of civic life under the aegis of a potentially repressive sovereign.

Makrembolites examines in his narrative the paradoxical relationship between sovereign power and human subject through the travails of Eros's most tormented victim—the amorous protagonist himself. In the first three books of the novel the young hero, suspicious of the workings of Eros, tempers his passions with reason and safeguards his autonomy, resisting both the advances of the heroine and Eros's traps. His shameless defiance of authority reaches its apex in

Book IV where, inspired by an elaborate panel that graces the garden of his host Sosthenes, he engages in a philosophical exegesis of Eros's enigmatic nature with his cousin and confidant Kratisthenes. The two young men examine the side panels that frame Eros's central portrait and puzzle over Eros's dubious relationship with his subjects. Kratisthenes, without disputing Eros's cosmic status, betrays distinct unease with the idea that Eros may be free to impose his will and exercise his force unrestricted,<sup>64</sup> while the hero argues that Eros is a tyrant indeed, since his retinue consists not of willing subjects, but of slaves and other attendants held by force (IV, 20.4-5, p. 47). In defense of his argument, Hysminias directs the attention of his companion to the impressive entourage of King Eros and points out that "men," and thus subjects, "are also those to whom months have been distributed by the painter," which is peculiar indeed, because "if everything is in fact in complete thrall to Eros," as the panel artwork indicates, "how can a part of the whole escape his servitude?"<sup>65</sup>

The point made implicitly by the hero here is that not only creation, but the whole of time is subject to Eros's tyranny.<sup>66</sup> Hysminias ultimately wins the debate, concluding that since "all beings and everything that results out of night and day are slaves to Eros," as the painting explicitly indicates, then Eros must rule every season and be a tyrant indeed:

Eros was indeed depicted as a sovereign and the whole creation stood before him [personified] in complete servitude, with the seasons represented as men; [but] if everything indeed exists in complete thrall to Eros, how can a segment escape his servitude? And if every segment of time—whether it is part of the day or night—exists in complete servitude, according to the painting, everything that results from it and everything that is in it cannot escape Eros' tyranny but will be summoned into servitude against its will. (IV, 20.4-5; p. 47)<sup>67</sup>

The hero's articulate exegesis of Eros's tyrannical nature is as much the result of his own political awakening as it is the product of his ongoing antagonistic strife with Eros himself. In the first two books, Hysminias spends considerable energy scorning the mighty sovereign by insisting on his celibacy (for "the gods love the chaste and hate the evil men") and by remaining indifferent to the advances of the heroine;<sup>68</sup> as one

would expect, such shameless arrogance does not go unpunished for long. In due course, the hero is summoned to justice by Eros's attendants in a dream and pays dearly for his scorn. Once in the court of mighty Eros, Hysminias is chastised for his hubris and is reminded of his transgressions which are considerable indeed: cardinal among them is his stubborn chastity that has offended Eros and provoked his wrath (II, 14.6); of equal consequence is his shameless liberty and persistent self-sufficiency that have offended not only the "rose" (Hysmine), but the mighty sovereign himself (II, 10.2-3).<sup>69</sup>

The hero's arraignment and subsequent vassalage in Makrembolites' novel is described in terms of civil transgression punishable by law, which Eros embodies, defines, and executes. Hysminias is brought into bondage (literally and figuratively) because his faith in his own liberties—his self-sufficiency, reason, and free will—threaten to upset the universal *taxis* that Eros is trying to uphold. In order to prevent cosmic unrest, the hero's liberties must be restrained—Eros, in other words, must intervene to limit Hysminias' freedom in order to protect "the greater good," but also in order to ensure the heroine's own happiness which is only possible within the bounds of matrimony that the god himself oversees. The hero is ultimately spared Eros's wrath due to the swift intervention of Hysmine who pleads with the mighty sovereign to spare her beloved in return for joint submission and eternal vassalage. Hero and heroine are thus enrolled "in a novel servitude to Eros, a servitude which no one else had experienced, involving not only the body, but also the soul,"<sup>70</sup> and like all lovers come to terms with their fate, which, under Eros's aegis, is far more bearable than their condition under the human masters they each encounter thereafter.<sup>71</sup> The hero's awakening in the course of his travails thus is not only emotional, but also political as he recognizes the illusory nature of his autonomy and succumbs to Eros's will.<sup>72</sup>

### 'Fear God. Honour the Emperor'<sup>73</sup>

The iconographic evolution of Eros from an amorphous cosmic force in the ancient Greek novels of the Second Sophistic to a formidable potentate in the novels of Manasses and Makrembolites is certainly not a chance act of literary experimentation on the part of Byzantine literati, or worse, an act of literary imitation in the face of political pressures as it has been suggested; it is rather the byproduct of



the administrative and political crises of the eleventh and twelfth centuries and, thus, a deliberate political act. The twelfth century was a time of readjustment and change, "although often masked by the powerful conservative front put up by the emperors of the Comnenian dynasty and their court. Beneath this mask, intellectuals were coming to terms with a changed destiny: Byzantium no longer had a credible claim to be universal and divinely appointed empire,"<sup>74</sup> and yet political illusionism demanded that the sovereign image be revived and celebrated with greater fervor than ever—not only in imperial acclamations, but also in aristocratic literature and art.

The new iconographic image of love contributed to the restoration of the imperial image by casting the Byzantine emperor as an uncompromising power—a power indispensable to the well-being of an increasingly vulnerable empire; at the same time, it functioned as a vehicle for political criticism (at least in literary circles) as it exposed the dangers of sovereign absolutism and the fate of the human subject under it.<sup>75</sup> Prompted by administrative and political pressures, it seems, Constantinopolitan intellectuals capitalized on the rich iconographic registers of the Second Sophistic to produce a formidable image of imperial authority that addressed both the propagandistic dreams of the *Komnenoi* and the profound fears of an increasingly vulnerable empire. Most importantly, Byzantine literati managed to remain critical of the repressive conservatism of the *Komnenoi* by creating a dubious imperial icon whose metaphoric potential their patrons were unable to conceive, much less control. The sovereign transformation of Eros in twelfth-century Constantinople thus emerges as a deliberate political act—an act of Byzantine *kainotomia*—that, if considered in its appropriate socio-political and literary context, can shed light not only on the demands aristocratic patronage placed on Byzantine intellectuals, but also on the highly contested sequence of the four surviving novels.<sup>76</sup>

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Notes

<sup>1</sup> The completion of this article was made possible through the financial support of the Research Foundation of the City University of New York (PSC-CUNY), to which I am grateful.

<sup>2</sup> The personification of love as a formidable sovereign is characteristic of the transformation the classical image of Eros underwent in the hands of twelfth-century Byzantine literati. Hysminias, the hero of Makrembolites' romance excerpted above, receives several warnings against offending Eros with his persistent scorn, all of which culminate in his dramatic arraignment before the sovereign's court. There, "in the midst of the hall," (περί τὸ δωματίον) the hero witnesses Eros's attendants paying vassalage to the mighty sovereign: "εἰσιὼν πλῆθος οὐκ εὐαρίθμητον, ὄχλον σύμμικτον ἀνδρῶν, γυναικῶν, νεανίσκων, παρθένων· λαμπροφόροι πάντες τὴν δεξιάν· τὴν γὰρ τοὶ λαῖαν περὶ τὸ στῆθος εἶχον δουλοπρεπῶς. Καὶ μέσον τὸ περὶ τοῦ κήπου θριγγίον μεράκιον, τὸν γεγραμμένον Ἔρωτα, τὸν βασιλέα, τὸν φοβερόν ἐκείνον, ἐπὶ τοῦ χρυσοῦ καὶ πάλιν δίφρου καθήμενον." Similarly, in a later encounter with Eros, the hero realizes the futility of his resistance when the sovereign's cosmic influence is revealed to him in an *ekphrasis*: "Ἔρως γὰρ προέγραπται βασιλεὺς, καὶ πᾶσα φύσις ἀνδρῶν ὡς δούλη παρίστατο, ἄνδρες δὲ πάντως καὶ οἷς ὁ γραφεὺς τοὺς καιροὺς μεθρημόσατο." (Original text in Miroslav Marcovich, *Eustathius Macrembolites De Hysmines Hysminiae Amoribus Libri XI*, Munich and Leipzig, 2001). All English translations from the original Greek and Italian, with the exception of those attributed to specific scholars, are my own.

<sup>3</sup> Whether it was a *rhētor* doing the unthinkable and blaming the *laudandus* by praising what he had in fact failed to do, or a panegyrist calling upon the emperor to abandon his aggressive military policies, imperial politics depended on rhetoric and on the men who practiced it. For additional information on the role of rhetoric on the political life of late Byzantium, see M. Mullett, "Rhetoric, Theory and the Imperative of Performance: Byzantium and Now," in E. Jeffreys, *Rhetoric in Byzantium* (Burlington, 2001), 151-70; A. Kazhdan and G. Constable, *People and Power in Byzantium* (Dumbarton Oaks, 1982), 156-58; and N. G. Wilson's comprehensive study, *Scholars of Byzantium* (Cambridge, Mass., 1996), 136-272.

<sup>4</sup> There were endless occasions for displays of technical virtuosity in Komnenian Byzantium, and court writers made every effort to showcase their talents in them. For the impact of rhetoric (and the men who practiced it) on the Komnenian court, see P. Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos (1143-1180)* (Cambridge, 1993) and *Tradition and Transformation in Byzantium* (London, 1991), 219-99; A. R. Littlewood, *Originality in Byzantine Literature and Music* (Oxford, 1995), 20-28, 81-93 and 203-16; and essays by the following in Jeffreys's *Rhetoric in Byzantium*: D. Angelov, "Byzantine Imperial Panegyric as Advice Literature (1204-c.1350)" 55-72; W. Hörandner, "Court Poetry: Questions of Motifs, Structure, and Uncion" 75-85; and R. Webb, "Praise and Persuasion: Argumentation and Audience Response in Epideictic Oratory" 127-35.

<sup>5</sup> A number of detailed studies on the reception of the Byzantine novels have emerged since Roderick Beaton's seminal study of the genre in the late 1980s: *Medieval Greek Romance* (Cambridge, 1989; rpt. 1996). The most notable of these are P. Roilos, *Amphoteroglossia: A Poetics of the Twelfth-Century Medieval Greek Novel* (Cambridge, Mass., 2005); D. Yatromanolakis and P. Roilos (eds.), *Greek Ritual Poetics* (Cambridge, Mass., 2004); Ingela Nilsson, *Erotic Pathos, Rhetorical Pleasure: Narrative Technique and Mimesis in Eumathios Makrembolites' Hysmine and Hysminias* (Uppsala, 2001); S. MacAlister, *Dreams and Suicides: The Greek Novel from Antiquity to the Byzantine Empire* (London and New York, 1996); and P. Agapitos, "Apo to 'drama' tou Erotas sto 'aphegeman' tes Agapes: to erotiko mythistorioma sto Byzantio (endekatos-dekatos tetartos aionas)" in Chr. Angelidi, ed., *Byzantium Matures: Choices, Sensitivities, and Modes of Expression* (Athens, 2004), 53-72. For an up-to-date bibliography of recent scholarship on the Byzantine novel, see C. Jouanno, "The Byzantine Novel," *Ancient Narrative* 5 (2005): 1-10.

<sup>6</sup> Theodore Prodromos' *Rhodanthe and Dosikles*, Niketas Eugenianos' *Drosilla and Charikles*, and Eustathios Makrembolites' *Hysmine and Hysminias* are preserved entire and, although not precisely dated, were most likely produced between 1130 and 1150. Konstantine Manasses' *Aristandros and Kallithea* and the anonymous epic-romance *Digenes Akrites* (not considered here) survive only in fragments. The Greek novels of the Second Sophistic are available in two excellent collections: B. P. Reardon, ed., *Collected Ancient Greek*

*Novels* (Berkeley, 1989) and S. A. Stephens and J. J. Winkler, eds., *Ancient Greek Novels: The Fragments* (Princeton, 1995).

<sup>7</sup> Unlike their twelfth-century counterparts, these later romances—namely, *Belthandros and Chrysantza*, *Libistros and Rhodamne*, *Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe*, *The Tale of Achilles*, and *The Tale of Troy*—were written in vernacular Greek and most survive intact, although anonymous, with the exception of *Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe* that is attributed (inconclusively) to Andronikos Komnenos Branas Doukas Angelos Palaiologos, son of *Sebastokrator* Constantine and cousin of Emperor Andronikos II. Six additional romances were written in the period following the Fall of Constantinople to the Seljuk Turks in 1453 and are considered close adaptations of western romances. These are *Apollonios of Tyre*, *The Theseid*, *Imperios and Margarona*, *Phlorios and Platziaphlora*, *The Tale of Belisarios*, and *The War of Troy*.

<sup>8</sup> So much so, in fact, that the protagonists' troublesome passivity amounts to the status of a theme that deserves considerable attention, especially since the diachronic appeal of this theme can be witnessed in the narratives of the three romances that were produced during the Palaiologan period—namely, *Belthandros and Chrysantza*, *Libistros and Rhodamne*, and *Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe*.

<sup>9</sup> See for instance the notation of the Loeb editor of Achilles Tatius's *Leucippe and Clitophon* when the hero submits meekly to an insult by a rival: "The reader, bearing in mind Clitophon's behavior at his previous meeting with Thersander (v 23), will by this time have come to the conclusion that the hero of the romance is a coward of the purest water. I do not know if Achilles Tatius intended to depict him so, or whether it is a fault in the drawing" (VIII, 10).

<sup>10</sup> "Dosikles in Prodomos' romance has had a military upbringing and is apparently already experienced in the arts of war; Eugenianos' hero, Charikles, has the effeminate good looks and arrogant indifference to love of Xenophon's Abrokomes; but he has also been brought up to excel in the traditional pursuits of the Byzantine aristocracy, riding and hunting; while Hysminias is an exceptional young man of good family, chosen by lot to play the role of Zeus' herald in a religious ceremony, and taking himself and his duties very seriously" (Beaton, *Medieval Greek Romance*, 63).

<sup>11</sup> Descriptions of Eros in the narratives of the romances are often introduced in elaborate *ekphrases* that celebrate not only the sovereign image whose essence the fictional Eros was made to embody, but also human artifice and the power of human *logos*. For additional information on the efforts of Byzantine *rhētors* to manipulate linguistic, aesthetic, and philosophical conventions to their advantage, see the doctoral thesis of Panagiotis Roilos, *Generic Modulations in the Byzantine Learned Novel* (Harvard University, 1999) and, by the same author, "The Sacred and the Profane: Reenacting Ritual in the Medieval Greek Novel" in *Greek Poetics* (Cambridge, Mass., 2004), 210-26.

<sup>12</sup> Marcovich, *Eustathius Macrembolites: De Hysmines et Hysminiae Amoribus Libri XI*, 2.10 and 4.20-22 (pp. 19 and 46-49). In the second Book of *Hysmine and Hysminias* Eros is invariably addressed as βασιλεύς (king), αὐτοκράτωρ (emperor), δεσπότης (despot) and αἰθέντης (master), all titles reserved for the Byzantine emperor.

<sup>13</sup> *Hysmine and Hysminias*, 2.7-11; 3.1 (pp. 17-20 and 23-24); P. Magdalino, "Eros the King and the King of Amours: Some Observations on *Hysmine and Hysminias*." *DOP* 46 (1992): 197.

<sup>14</sup> "Ἐρωτι δόξαν τῷ τυράννῳ, παρθένε" (III, 17); "παντάναξ" (II 135); "δοῦλος ἄθλιος κατεσχέθην, / ὀλοσχερώς Ἐρωτι θηπεύων βίῃ." (VI 339-412), in *Drosilla and Charikles: A Byzantine Novel*, ed. and trans., J. B. Burton (Wauconda, Ill., 2004). For additional references to the sadistic nature of Eros in the same romance, see Books II and III, where Eros is repeatedly abhorred by the protagonists who acknowledge his cosmic status (II, 135), yet detest his shameless tyranny (III, 147), deeming him "αἰθᾶδη" (shameless) and "φονουργό" (murderous).

<sup>15</sup> For additional evidence on the tyrannous reign of Eros in Manasses' novel, see Frs. 8, 21, 22, 64, 95, 117 in E. Tsolakes' critical edition, *Συμβολή στη Μελέτη τοῦ Ποιητικοῦ Ἔργου τοῦ Κωνσταντίνου Μανασσῆ καὶ Κριτικὴ Ἑκδόση τοῦ Μυθιστορήματός του 'Τὰ Κατ' Ἀρίστανδρον καὶ Καλλιθέαν' (Ἐπιστημονικὴ Ἑπετηρὶς τῆς Φιλοσοφικῆς Σχολῆς τοῦ Πανεπιστημίου Θεσσαλονίκης, Παράρτημα, ἀρ. 10). Θεσσαλονίκη, 1967 or alternatively in Marcovich's edition, VIII 191-209. The destructive potential of Eros is also present in Eugenianos' *Drosilla and Charikles* (I, 8-23, 125-42, 260-65; III, 139-49; IV, 110-18, 178-83; V, 399-413; and VI, 336-44, 610-16) and in*

Makrembolites' *Hysmine and Hysminias* (II, 11-12, 14; III, 1; and XI, 14).

<sup>16</sup> In his *Progymnasmata*, Basilakes preserves the traditional iconography of Eros as it emerges in the novels of the Second Sophistic, while highlighting the god's destructive potential and arbitrary nature—qualities also showcased in the Komnenian romances. For more information on Basilakes' perception of love see *Progimnasmi e monodie* (Naples, 1983), 46-48 and 51-54. For the influence of the ancient Greek novels on Makrembolites' romance, *Hysmine and Hysminias*, see Nilsson's detailed study, *Erotic Pathos, Rhetorical Pleasure: Narrative Technique and Mimesis in Eustathios Makrembolites' Hysmine and Hysminias*, 103-36 and 202-08. For a comprehensive study of the rhetorical fabric of the Komnenian novels and the aesthetic reception of their ancient Greek predecessors—the novels of the Second Sophistic—by twelfth-century Byzantine literati, see P. Roilos, *Amphoteroglossia: A Poetics of the Twelfth-Century Medieval Greek Novel* (Cambridge, 2005).

<sup>17</sup> In Longus's *Daphnis and Chloe* Eros is initially described by the herdsman-musician Philetas as a mischievous, fair-skinned child with bright red hair (II, 4); further into the narrative, however, the god himself offers a very different account of his nature, casting himself as a primeval cosmic force: ". . . I am hard to catch, even for a hawk and an eagle and any bird faster than these," Eros asserts. "I am not really a boy even though I look like one, but I am even older than Cronus and the whole of time itself" (II, 5).

<sup>18</sup> When scornful Habrocomes refuses the advances of the heroine (and thus Eros's tyranny) he is dealt appropriate recompense: ". . . the god press[es] him all the more; he drag[s] him along as he resist[s], and torture[s] him against his will." Eventually, however, he comes to realize the futility of his rebellion and swiftly casts himself as a suppliant instead: ". . . he thr[ows] himself to the ground. 'You have won, Eros,' he sa[ys]. 'You have set up a great trophy over the self-possessed Habrocomes; he is your suppliant. In his desperation he has come for refuge to you, the master of all things. Do not abandon me or punish my arrogance too hard; because I had not felt you, Eros, I paid no attention to you as yet. But now give me Anthia. Do not be only a vengeful god against the man who has resisted you, but a help to the

man you have conquered.”” Trans. by G. Anderson in Reardon, ed., 130.

<sup>19</sup> In *Daphnis and Chloe*, Eros’s dominion over animate and inanimate creation is established early on in the novel in an edificatory speech delivered to the amorous protagonists by herdsman-musician Philetas: “Love is a god, my children;” the herdsman declares, “he is young, beautiful, and winged; and so he enjoys youth, pursues beauty, and makes souls take wing. Zeus has not so much power as he has: he rules the elements; he rules the stars; he rules the fellow gods—more completely than you rule your goats and sheep. And the flowers are the work of Love; all the plants are his creation; thanks to him, the rivers flow; the winds blow. I have seen a bull in love, bellowing as though stung by a gadfly, and a he goat in love with a she-goat, following her everywhere.” (Trans. by C. Gill in Reardon, ed., 306.) Similarly, in Tatius’s *Leucippe and Clitophon* the god’s cosmic dominion is documented in an elaborate *ekphrasis* that describes his involvement in the rape of Europa. The author’s description of Eros’s grip over mighty Zeus is part of an elaborate votive painting in which Eros, “a tiny child with wings spread, quiver dangling, torch in hand,” is sporting a “sly smile, . . . as if in mockery [to Zeus] that he had, for Love’s sake, become bull.” (Trans. J. J. Winkler in Reardon, ed., 177.) Tatius concludes his *ekphrasis* by showcasing Eros’s overreaching influence: “Though the entire painting was worthy of admiration,” he notes, “I devoted my special attention to this figure of Eros leading the bull, for I have long been fascinated by passion, and I exclaimed, ‘To think that a child can have such power over heaven and earth and sea.’” (177).

<sup>20</sup> For the purposes of this paper, my assumption is that the internal sequence of the Komenian novels follows the order of Prodromos, Eugenianos, Manasses, Makrembolites, with some reservations on the order of the last two as Manasses’ novel survives only in fragments. My reconstruction of the internal order of the novels is based on the iconographic evolution of Eros in their narratives and on recent seminal studies by Beaton (1996) and Magdalino (1992 and 1993) that have established a convincing *terminus post quem* for the novels of Prodromos and Eugenianos (ca. 1140). Eros’s evolution from a tyrannous cosmic force (in the novels of Prodromos and Eugenianos) to a militant *archon* and formidable sovereign (in the novels of Manasses and Makrembolites, respectively) offers substantial proof that *Hysmine and Hysminias* postdates the novels of Prodromos and

Eugenianos, especially if considered in light of unshakable evidence offered by Magdalino (1992) on the association of the image of Eros *basileus* with the court of Manuel I and the association of Makrembolites with activities of the Neoplatonic circles during the early years of Manuel's reign, proposed by Roilos (2005). I thus believe that the four surviving novels were composed during the first two decades of Manuel's reign (1143-1160) in the order suggested above.

<sup>21</sup> "Λαμπρό[ς] καὶ ὄντως βασιλικό[ς]" (*Hysmine and Hysminias*, II, 7. 1-2).

<sup>22</sup> *Hysmine and Hysminias*, II, 7.1. For the close association of Prodromos, Eugenianos, and Manasses with the Komnenian court, see A. P. Kazhdan, "Bemerkungen zu Niketas Eugenianos," *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinischen Gesellschaft* 16 (1967), 102-108, and "Theodore Prodromus: A Reappraisal" in *Studies On Byzantine Literature of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries*, in collaboration with Simon Franklin (Cambridge, Mass., 1984), 87-114. For a detailed account of the social milieu of the novels, their audience, and respective patrons, see A. P. Kazhdan and A. Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Berkeley, 1985), 74-119 and 130-33; and Kazhdan and Constable, 96-139.

<sup>23</sup> For a concise study of aristocratic patronage, influence, and literary interaction between Latin and Byzantine literati during this period, see M. Mullett, "Aristocracy and Patronage in the Literary Circles of Comnenian Constantinople" in M. Angold, ed., *The Byzantine Aristocracy, IX to XIII Centuries* (Oxford, 1984), 173-97. See also E. Jeffreys, "The Novels of Mid-Twelfth Century Constantinople: The Literary and Social Context," *Aetos* (1998): 191-99; "The Comnenian Background to the *Romans d' Antiquité*," *Byzantion* 10 (1980), 455-86; and "Western Infiltration of the Byzantine Aristocracy: Some Suggestions" in Angold 173-97 and 202-10; Magdalino, *The Empire*; and C. Cupane, "Ἐρως Βασιλεύς: la figura di Eros nel romanzo bizantino d' amore," *Atti del' Accademia di Scienze, Lettere e Arti di Palermo*, 4<sup>th</sup> ser. 33 (1973-74): 245-81.

<sup>24</sup> This polarizing quest for origins has yielded little about literary innovation and even less about the presence of the appropriated image in western and Byzantine literature. For additional information on the



question of origins, see S. V. Polyakova, *Opyt interpretatsii "Povesti ob Ismini i Isminii" Evmafia Makremvolita* (Moscow, 1979), 89-115; M. Alexiou, "A Critical Reappraisal of Eustathios Makrembolites' *Hysmine and Hysminias*" *BMGS* 3: 23-43; S. MacAlister, "Byzantine Twelfth-Century Romances: A Relative Chronology" *BMGS* 15 (1991): 175-210; and C. Cupane, "Byzantinisches Erotikon: Ansichten und Einsichten" *JÖB* 37: 213-33, and "Metamorphosen des Eros, Liebesdarstellung und Liebesdiskurs in der Byzantinischen Literatur der Komnenenzeit" in P. A. Agapitos and D. R. Reinsch, eds., *Der Roman der Komnenenzeit* (Wiesbaden, 2000), 25-54.

<sup>25</sup> Cupane, "Ἔρως Βασιλείς." See also Cupane's "Il motivo del castello nella narrativa tardo-bizantina: evoluzione di un' allegoria," *JÖB* 27 (1978): 229-67.

<sup>26</sup> Magdalino, "Eros" 179-204. For a critical discussion of Cupane's work, see Beaton, *Medieval Greek Romance*, 154-63, and M. Alexiou, *After Antiquity: Greek Language, Myth and Metaphor* (Ithaca and London, 2002), 115-16.

<sup>27</sup> Magdalino, "Eros" 197, and Cupane "Ἔρως Βασιλείς," esp. 150-61.

<sup>28</sup> Higher education in the capital had been encouraged, organized, and overseen by a series of emperors since the mid-ninth century. On schools and the educational system in Constantinople, see Browning, "The Patriarchal School" (1962, 1963); Kazhdan and Epstein, 121-33; and Magdalino, *The Empire*, 325-30 and 331-82.

<sup>29</sup> For a general account of twelfth-century Byzantine education, see Magdalino, *The Empire*, 325-30 and 331-82; for a more thorough study of the Patriarchal School and the involvement of the emperor in the nomination and subsequent patronage of non-theological teachers, see Browning, "The Patriarchal School," 32: 167-201 and 33:11-40, and 181-83, where Browning exposes Nikephoros Basilakes' defiance of Patriarchal orders that led to his subsequent excommunication. For the interaction of teachers and students in the late centuries, see C. N. Constantinides' "Teachers and Students of Rhetoric in the Late Byzantine Period" in Jeffreys, ed., *Rhetoric in Byzantium*, 39-53.

<sup>30</sup> Byzantine representations of emperors that mirror Makrembolites' iconography abound. On the relationship between emperor and Christ in Byzantine literature, see P. Agapitos, "'Η εἰκόνα τοῦ αὐτοκράτορα Βασιλείου Α' στὴν φιλομακεδονικὴ γραμματεία 867-957.'" *Hellenika* 40: 285-322, esp. 292-94. On depictions of the emperor in twelfth-century Byzantium, see P. Magdalino and R. Nelson, "The Emperor in Byzantine Art of the Twelfth Century" *ByzF* 8 (1982): 123-83.

<sup>31</sup> See I Samuel [I Kings] VIII: 7. For the dual nature of the emperor, see Gilbert Dagron, *Emperor and Priest: The Imperial Office in Byzantium* (Cambridge, Mass., 2003), esp. 282-312 and I. Spatharakis, *The Portrait in Byzantine Illuminated Manuscripts* (Leyden, 1976), 96-151. For the use of imperial art as political propaganda under the *Komnenoi* (1081-1185) and *Angeloi* (1185-1204), see Magdalino and Nelson, "The Emperor," 130-35.

<sup>32</sup> Thomas Conley, in a recent paper submitted in the 40<sup>th</sup> International Congress on Medieval Studies entitled "Davidic Eloquence: The Uses of Psalms in Byzantine Imperial Rhetoric, noted a distinct effort on the part of court orators to depict the emperor as a *τύπος* of David. Both the Davidic ideal and the rhetoric that communicated it, according to Conley, "intersect quite closely with the narrative of the fortunes of the emperors from Alexios I (1081-1118) to Isaac II (1185-1195) and represent a response of the court *rhētores* to continuing problems of legitimacy and succession." Thus, the flourishing of Davidic eloquence in Komnenian Byzantium was not a mere literary fashion, but rather "a strategy of legitimation."

<sup>33</sup> "New is the concept of his regality, but he dresses in colors primarily Byzantine as the regal garments in Eustathio's *βασιλεὺς αὐτοκράτωρ* indicate. In fact, [the Byzantines] depict Cupid according to their taste, sitting on a golden throne and elevated, which brings to mind the famed palace of Constantinople. Also primarily Byzantine are the two allegoric figures—day and night—that are next to King Eros" (Cupane, "'Ερως Βασιλεὺς,'" 259-60).

<sup>34</sup> The celebration of Eros is found widespread in rhetorical exercises meant for instruction as well. In Nikephoros Basilakes' *progymnasmata*, and particularly in his character studies on mythological subjects, (*ethopoiiai*) Eros is hailed a "great potentate"

(μέγας δυνάστης) (Ed. Pignani, 184, lines 20-22; 195 lines 34-40), while in an unpublished poem by Manganeios Prodromos, cited by Magdalino, the psychological powers of Eros bring to mind the winged tyrant's psychological ploys in Eugenianos' romance, *Drosilla and Charikles*. Eros "inflames passions not just by invading the senses, but by penetrating the consciousness and using the mind to paint an image of the beloved" ("Eros" 200).

<sup>35</sup> As Nilsson documents in her own study of Makrembolites' *Hysmine and Hysminias*, "the imagery of Eros, the descriptions of his influence, and even the narrative framing with symposia and banquet, all go back to the same ancient tradition that is expressed in the dialogues of Plato and in the Hellenistic *erotikoi logoi*" (206).

<sup>36</sup> The products of aristocratic commissions were often exhibited in literary gatherings at aristocratic salons. Prodromos and Manasses were frequent participants of these salons. For the reception of the novels in Komnenian Constantinople and their respective audiences, see Jeffreys, "The Novels," 191-99; and Mullett, "Aristocracy," 173-97.

<sup>37</sup> In Eugenianos' *Drosilla and Charikles* Eros is often hailed in terms that bring to mind imperial ceremonial: "Ἔρωτι δόξαν τῷ τυράννῳ, παρθένε" (III, 17), while in *Aristandros and Kallithea* he is saluted as the master of all creation: "Ἔρως οὐ μόνον ἐν πλωτοῖς καὶ πτερωτοῖς ἰσχύει, / οὐκ ἐν ἀεροβάμοσιν οὐδ' ἐν τοῖς χειρσπόροις, / ἀλλὰ καὶ λίθων καὶ φυτῶν αὐτῶν κατακαυχᾶται / καὶ βέλος ἐπαφίησι καὶ τοῖς ἀνομοφύλοις. / Ἔρως ποιεῖ καὶ ποταμὸν γλυκύν θαλασσοβάτην" (Λόγος α, 57-61).

<sup>38</sup> *Andreia* (valor), *phronesis* (temperance), *sophrosyne* (prudence), and *dikaiosyne* (justice)—the four cardinal virtues as they emerge in Agathon's speech in praise of Eros in Plato's *Symposium*—were deprived of their secular connotations in the Middle Ages, and, fully Christianized, came to constitute the very essence of imperial conduct. *Philanthropia* (humanity) and *megalopsychia* (magnanimity) are medieval additions to the canon of virtues with purely Christian roots. The last two attributes are embodied and regularly exhibited by Eros in the Palaiologan romances.

<sup>39</sup> For Prodrornos' oration see Magdalino, "Eros," citation 17, p. 199.

<sup>40</sup> Magdalino, in the *Empire of Manuel Komnenos (1143-1180)*, cites several encomia that celebrate the emperor's *andreia* (prowess) by glorifying "bloodshed, conquest, and plunder" and present his "conflicts as just war of conquest and liberation" (420).

<sup>41</sup> His arrows are invariably described as bitter and poisonous (φαρμακτά [καί] πικρά) and their effect as all-consuming: "πυρπολοῦντα καρδίας" (VIII, 199).

<sup>42</sup> "Fierce Eros was toying with the honored youth / as was his habit, / stringing his bow / and shooting a multitude of blazing arrows on the youth and maidens."

<sup>43</sup> "So deeply the arrow pierced the soul / (everyone witnessed Eros shoot his bitter and poisonous arrows, setting the heart ablaze)."

<sup>44</sup> The hero in Eugenianos' *Drosilla and Charikles* similarly recognizes the inevitable: "no one running on foot will escape the winged god" (τὸν πτηνὸν οὐδεὶς φεύγεται περὶς τρέχων, VIII, 103; trans. in Burton's *Drosilla and Charikles*, p. 165) and dutifully submits to the service of Eros. The episode recurs in Makrembolites' *Hysmine and Hysminias*. See in particular II, 14.4-6; p. 22.

<sup>45</sup> "Ἀνιάρὸν τι χρῆμα τοῦτο τῆς Ἐρώς / ἐμφύς γὰρ ὥσπερ βδέλλα λιμνῆτις πίνει / τὸν αἵματος ροὴν πάντα τῆς ἄκρας νόσου" (IV, 399-401); trans. in Burton, ed., *Drosilla and Charikles*, p. 83.

<sup>46</sup> "Καίεις, φλογίζεις, πυρπολεῖς, καταφλέγεις" (IV, 403). See also an earlier—and much exaggerated—lament in the same romance: "σφάττεις, φονεύεις, πυρπολεῖς, καταφλέγεις, / πλήττεις ἀναιρεῖς, φαρμακεύεις, ἐκτρέπεις. / Τῆς ἰσχύος σου, πτηνοτοξοπυρφόρε" (II, 141-43); trans. in Burton's *Drosilla and Charikles*, p. 29.

<sup>47</sup> "Δοκεῖ δέ μοί τις, ἂν παρέλθοι καὶ φύγοι / Ἐρωτα τὸν τύρρανον ἐπερωμένον, / καὶ τοὺς ἐφ' ὕψους ἐκμετρήσοι ἀστέρας" (IV, 411-13); trans. in Burton, ed., *Drosilla and Charikles*, p. 85. The heroine is the only victim of Eros who dares challenge her fate by pursuing a union with her beloved Charikles, and yet even she takes caution not to

offend the universal master, by prudently confronting "παλαμναίαν Τύχην" instead (I, 319).

<sup>48</sup> Kleandros' submission resembles a horrifying initiation ritual: "δι' ὀμμάτων γὰρ δὺς Ἔρως τὴν καρδίαν / οὐ μέχρι ταύτης ἴσταται φλέγειν θέλων, / μέλη δὲ πάντα πυρπολεῖ περιτρέχων" ("for Eros, having entered my heart through my eyes, / did not stop at this in his desire to inflame me, / but running about, he set all my limbs ablaze"; II, 121-23 and 261-65. Trans. in Burton, ed., *Drosilla and Charikles*, p. 27), and yet there is no indication in his lament that he would have rather been neglected by "πανδαμάτωρ" Eros. His paradoxical reaction is fully justified in Book III, where it is revealed that Eros is not only "αἰθάρης" (shameless) and "θρασύσπλαγνος" (heartless) but also "δυσαντίβλεπτος," (obscure) presumably because of his knack to shift shapes and deceive (III, 141). In retrospect, then (and considering Eros's potential for destruction) Kleandros' submission and subsequent plea: "μηδεὶς πτοεῖσθω κἄν πεφαρμακευμένα / τὰ τοῦ πόθου βέλεμνα τὰ ξιφηφόρα." ("Let no one fear the sword-sharp darts of desire, / even they are poisoned"; II, 125-26; Burton, p. 29) is not only prudent but life-affirming indeed.

<sup>49</sup> "πτηνοδρομῆσαι τοὺς λίθους εἰς αἰθέρα / καὶ λίθον ἀδάμαντα τμηθῆναι ξίφει / ἢ τοξικῆς Ἔρωτα παυθῆναι κάτω, / κάλλους παρόντος καὶ βλεπόντων ὀμμάτων." ("sooner would stones fly winged to the sky / and diamond be cut by sword / than Eros cease to shoot arrows to earth, / as long as beauty exists and eyes perceive it." IV, 388-91; Burton, p. 83)

<sup>50</sup> These devastating setbacks mark two periods of political crisis and intellectual reorientation in Byzantium that correlate with the celebration of the imperial image and the revival of escapist literature in the form of narrative fiction. The military disaster of 1071 in particular marks the most demoralizing point in late Byzantine life: in one catastrophic day Byzantium lost its major recruiting region, its major grain-producing region, and its vital trade route between Constantinople and Anatolia. Most significantly, in the aftermath of the Battle (and with the emperor in barbarian hands) the spirit of Constantinopolitan society was shaken and the state's prestige forever lost.

<sup>51</sup> In *Hysmine and Hysminias*, Makrembolites' hero respectively recognizes that fulfilling existence is only possible under Eros's aegis and dutifully enrolls in a novel servitude to Eros—a servitude that

involves “not only the body, but also the soul”: “Οὕτως ἐγὼ δουλογραφῶμαι τῷ Ἐρωτι καινὴν τινα δούλωσιν καὶ ἦν οὐδεὶς οὐδέπω δεδούλωται, οὐ μόνον σώματος, ἀλλὰ καὶ ψυχῆς. (III, 10.5, p. 34).

<sup>52</sup> It is worth noting that Manasses' Eros is neither human, nor abstract, although he is hailed “δεσπότης] τῶν ἐμφύχων / καὶ τῶν πτηνῶν καὶ τῶν πεζῶν καὶ τῶν θαλασσοπόλων” (“master of all animate creation / [of] birds, quadrupeds, and amphibians”; II, 24-25, p. 81) and is frequently described exhibiting human sentiments. He is invariably termed insolent (αὐθάδης and θρασύσπλαγνος), despondent (βαρίθυμος), conniving (δολοπλόκος), vengeful (ἐκδικητή[ς]), and even destructive and murderous (βίαιος, διώκτη[ς] καὶ φονουργός).

<sup>53</sup> “Ἄν ἔρως οὖν ἀτιμασθῇ καὶ περιφρονηθῇ, / εὐθὺς εὐθὺς τὸν γείτονα θυμὸν μετακαλεῖται, / ὃ δὲ θυμὸς ἀναθορύων, πείθεται γάρ ὡς γείτων, / καὶ πῦρ ἀνάψας ἄξυλον, φλογόεν ἐν καρδίᾳ, / [. . .] προπολεμοῖ, πρωτομαχεῖ, συμπνέει, συστρατεύει, ὡς πολεμίους τε τοὺς πρὶν κολάζει φίλουμένους.”

<sup>54</sup> The liver and the heart were frequently associated with the production of humours that induced vengeful desire. “οὐ πάραλις βαρίθυμος, ὡς ἔρωτα νικῆσαι / εἰς τόλμας, εἰς θρασύτητας, εἰς φονουργούς μανίας / Παρακαλεῖ γάρ τὸν θυμὸν οἷα συστρατιώτῃ, / καὶ σὺν αὐτῷ καὶ μετ' αὐτοῦ λυττήσας ἀκαθέκτως / ὀπλίζεται πρὸς ἄμυναν τοῦ γε λελυτηκότος. / Εἰσὶ γάρ ἔρως καὶ θυμὸς ἀλλήλοισ ὁμοστέγοι, / ἀλλήλοισ ἀγχιγείτομες καὶ συνασπιδιώται, / εἴπερ ἐγγὺς τὸ θέμεθλον ἥπατος καὶ καρδίας.” Manasses' Eros is evidently far from a model sovereign. This “all-daring” (πάντολμος) and “conniving” (δολοπλόκος) ruler is the very impersonation of retribution (δίκη), not justice (δικαιοσύνη), and this is evident from his numerous transgressions: “Θεσμούς καὶ νόμους συμπατεῖς καὶ τὴν αἰδῶ διώκεις / Τυμβωρυχεῖς, τοιχωρυχεῖς, ἀπεμπολεῖς, προδίδως.” (II, 597-98).

<sup>55</sup> Iconographic depictions of Eros in the court of Manuel I Komnenos celebrate the militarism of the emperor and his spiritual associations. For additional information on Manuel's imperial portraiture, see S. Lambros, “Ho Makrianos Kodix 524,” *Neos Hellenismion* 8 (1911), 172, translated into English by Cyril Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire* (Englewood Cliffs, 1972), 228ff.

<sup>56</sup> John II Komnenos (1118-1143) was frequently praised for his governance in encomiastic speeches that highlighted his strategic skill

and prudent leadership. Magdalino, in *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos (1143-1180)*, cites several encomia that celebrate his *andreia* (by glorifying “bloodshed, conquest, and plunder”) and present his “conflicts as just wars of conquest and liberation.” Manuel’s prowess was similarly celebrated in ceremonial oratory and imperial portraiture that highlighted the emperor’s divine associations and revealed a hope that “the emperor’s victories and dominion will extend to the ends of the earth” (420).

<sup>57</sup> See p. 473. In the same source Magdalino cites three poems by Manganeios Prodromos in which the emperor’s virtues are likened to those of Eros. In the first poem entitled “To Eros,” the poet places great “emphasis on the psychological power of Eros to inflame passion not just by invading the senses, but by penetrating the consciousness and using the mind to paint the image of the beloved” (200); in the second poem, the poet praises Manuel’s prowess and physical appearance in an explicit bath scene where Manuel is waited upon by cupids (ἔρωτες) ‘erotically and slavishly,’ while in the third, Manganeios likens Manuel with Eros in a ‘literary petition, where the poet introduces his subject in the following terms: “I daringly present an erotic example (ἐρωτικὸν παράδειγμα) . . . to the emperor of the Cupids full of Grace (τῷ τῶν ἐρώτων βασιλεῖ τῷ κεχαριτωμένῳ) . . . and bring in as a witness Solomon, the most erotic of the kings of the old (τὸν ἐρωτικώτερον τῶν πάλαι βασιλέων)” (200-01).

<sup>58</sup> Magdalino concludes that the poems of Manganeios Prodromos “leave no doubt that the concept of Eros the King was all but fully formulated in Byzantine court rhetoric of the 1150s,” and that “the imperial court at this time was a milieu where the emperor, Manuel Komnenos, was openly referred to as the βασιλεὺς τῶν ἐρώτων and compared to the ancient Greek god of love” (202).

<sup>59</sup> Eros’s tactical savvy is also evident in the successful alliance he strikes with anger: “Οὕτω τὸ κάλλος τύραινος βαρύς, καρδιοκράτωρ, / βέλος ἐστὶν ἀσίδηρον, ἀλλ’ ὑπὲρ βέλος πρέχει, / ἀλλ’ ἵπταται ταχύτερον ἱέρακος καὶ κίρκου· / κἄν τῆς καρδίας ᾤψηται, κἄν εἰς ψυχὴν ἐγκύψῃ, / ἰοῦ δριμύτητος πληγῶν, ἰοῦ τραυμάτων ἄλγους· / ἰὸν γὰρ ἀπερεύγεται θανάσιμον τὸ βλήμα / κἄν ὁ βαλὼν ἀθέατος, κἄν ἄχαλκον τὸ βέλος.” (II, 209-15).

<sup>60</sup> Although Eros's substance and form appear elusive in Manasses' romance (Eros remains "δυσαντίβλεπτος"—"obscure or hard to face"—throughout the narrative), his cosmic status is never in question. He is still hailed "δεσπο[της] τῶν ἐμψύχων / καὶ τῶν πτηνῶν καὶ τῶν πεζῶν καὶ τῶν θαλασσοπλόων" (II, 24-25), and his rule extends well beyond the realm of the known (II, 227-38): natural phenomena, the four elements, the seasons, Day and Night, are all subject to the will of this cosmic ruler—" . . . καὶ δοῦλός τις γενόμενος ταῖς Ἐρωτος παλάμαις" (II, 231).

<sup>61</sup> The military aristocracy that succeeded Basil, weary of its fate under another free-minded emperor, promoted a series of incompetent rulers to the throne that brought the empire to a new low. By the time Byzantium had passed to the competent hands of the *Komnenoi* in 1081, the state had been so thoroughly wrecked—with half of its territory lost and nearly all its army and ample treasury squandered—that "repairing it required not just a competent ruler, but a military genius." (Treadgold, *A History of the Byzantine State and Society*, 611). For the influence of the military aristocracy in the political affairs of eleventh-century Byzantium, see Kazhdan and Constable, 140-61 and 162-78; Treadgold, 583-611; and J. Cheynet, *The Byzantine Aristocracy and Its Military Function* (Brookfield VT, 2006).

<sup>62</sup> "Glorious, and regal, indeed" (II, 7. 1-2).

<sup>63</sup> "'Ολος στρατός παρειστήκει τῷ μεираκίῳ, ὅλαι πόλεις, χορός σύμμικτος ἀνδρῶν, γυναικῶν, πρεσβυτῶν, γραιῶν, μεираκίων, παρθένων. Βασιλεῖς, τύραννοι, δυνάσται, κρατοῦντες γῆς ὡς δοῦλοι παρίστανται οὐκ ἴσα καὶ βασιλεῖ ἀλλ' ἴσα θεῷ." The ekphrasis is the first part of a tripartite panel that celebrates Eros's sovereignty over animate and inanimate creation.

<sup>64</sup> If Eros were to rule all year round—as he in fact appears to do, depicted in the company of the four seasons, the four virtues, and the Labors of the Months—he would "overstep his limits, disregarding laws, [and] that is tyrannical action, indeed," Kratisthenes argues (IV, 20.3; p. 46-47).

<sup>65</sup> On one side of the tripartite panel that artist has depicted the twelve months, each engaged in different occupation (reaper, vintner, sower, hunter, etc.). Hysminias and Kratisthenes—guided by the verse inscription on the bottom of the panel—infer that the men are



depictions of the human labors in the course of the year, and are further governed by the seasons.

<sup>66</sup> Hysminias' point on the tyrannous nature of love echoes the argument Eros himself makes in Longus's *Daphnis and Chloe*, the Hellenistic predecessor of the Komnenian novels. In Book II of Longus's novel, cupid intervenes in a discussion that herdsman Philetas is carrying with the amorous protagonists to clarify his true nature, correcting thus the way Philetas's deceptive portrait of the mighty god: ". . . I am hard to catch," Eros proclaims, "even for hawk and an eagle and any bird faster than these. I am not really a boy even though I look like one, but I am even older than Cronus and the whole of time itself" (Trans. by C. Gill in Reardon, ed., II, 5).

<sup>67</sup> "Ἔρως γὰρ προγέγραπται βασιλεύς, καὶ πᾶσα φύσις ἀνδρῶν ὡς δούλη παρίστατο, ἄνδρες δὲ πάντως καὶ οἷς ὁ γραφεὺς τοὺς καιροὺς μεθερμόσατο· εἰ γοῦν τὸ πᾶν καὶ καθόλου δουλοῦται τῷ Ἐρωτι, πῶς τὸ μερικὸν ἐκφυγῇ τὴν δούλωσιν; Εἰ δὲ καὶ πᾶν τμήμα καιροῦ καὶ διάστημα ἐξ ἡμέρας καὶ νυκτὸς ὡς ἐξ ὕλης τὴν σύστασιν ἐσχηκεν, αὐτὰ δὲ δούλαι κατὰ τὴν γραφὴν καὶ τὸ σὸν μυσταγωγῆμα, εὐδην ὡς καὶ τὸ ἐκ τούτων καὶ δι' αὐτῶν [καὶ] ὅλον ἐν ὅλαις αὐταῖς οὐκ ἀποφυγῇ τὴν δούλωσιν, ἀλλ' ἄκον συνδουλαγωγηθήσεται."

<sup>68</sup> II, 14.6; p. 22. Kratisthenes cautions the hero repeatedly against offending Eros with his shameless self-sufficiency. See in particular Book II (14. 4-6; p. 22), where Kratisthenes outlines Hysminias' vain quest through a series of questions that expose the futility of the hero's stubborn plan.

<sup>69</sup> The hero's offenses against Eros are dispersed throughout the first two books and several clues to his transgressions are offered in the ekphrasis of Eros in the garden of Sosthenes. See in particular I, 9.3; II, 10.2-3; II, 6.6; II, 14.6; II, 14. 4-6.

<sup>70</sup> III, 10.5; p. 34. The lover's unwilling submission is highlighted throughout the romance; see in particular Makrembolites' recurrent use of the impressive compound "δουλογραφοῦμαι" (brought into servitude) in Books II (9), III (10), IV (20), X (8), and XI (5).

<sup>71</sup> Following Eros's revelation, both hero and heroine become slaves of human masters for some time before they are finally reunited and delivered back into their state of willing bondage to Eros.

<sup>72</sup> See III, 1.1-5.5, pp. 23-28.

<sup>73</sup> See First Epistle of St Peter 2:17.

<sup>74</sup> R. Beaton, "Epic and Romance in the Twelfth-Century," in A.R. Littlewood, (ed.), *Originality in Byzantine Literature, Art, and Music* (Oxford, 1995), 89.

<sup>75</sup> For the Byzantines, their Empire was not only universal, but the only true power in the *oikoumene*. For additional information on the universality of the empire and the propaganda that supported it in the court of the Komnenoi, see Kazhdan and Epstein, pp. 158-96.

<sup>76</sup> For my view on the internal sequence of the novels, see note 20.

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